USING MENTORING TO PROMOTE GIRLS' EDUCATION

WHY IS GIRLS' EDUCATION IMPORTANT?

Education, especially primary schooling, contributes to democracy and social and economic development. It is important to educate all children, but educating girls yields high social and economic returns. Female literacy typically improves both maternal and child health and leads to increased agricultural production. Despite enormous gains, girls still lag behind boys in years of completed primary education. Girls receive less schooling than boys because of cultural beliefs about educating women; family labor needs and resource levels; lack of facilities for girls at schools, such as latrines; and teachers' and male classmates' treatment of girls. A concerted effort is needed to increase educational opportunities for girls. Business, religious, and community leaders, women's groups, nongovernmental organizations (NGO), and private voluntary organizations should be part of that effort because they have the requisite knowledge, experience, and connections to coordinate small- to large-scale initiatives designed to eliminate barriers to girls' education.

WHAT IS MENTORING?

Mentoring is a relationship that involves a more knowledgeable or experienced person (a mentor) helping a less knowledgeable or experienced one (a protégé) rise to his or her potential. Mentors remove barriers to opportunities, model positive behaviors, and provide guidance to people in need. Mentoring can be part of a naturally occurring relationship or part of a planned program. Mentoring programs can be adapted to fit the needs and missions of many organizations. Schools can implement mentoring programs to reduce dropout rates and increase student achievement. Religious organizations can help young people develop social or academic skills and offer them role models who can instill moral and religious values. Businesses can use mentoring programs as a means to educate and recruit future employees.

How does mentoring support girls' education?

Mentors, especially female mentors, are role models and can make a difference in girls' participation and persistence in education and in their personal and economic lives after their schooling is over. Mentors can help girls overcome such barriers to education as low educational aspirations, low parental expectations, and inadequate information about careers. When tutoring is provided, mentors help girls improve their academic performance. Many programs work with parents to help them appreciate the importance of educating their daughters, to involve them in the school, and to help them provide their daughters with a supportive environment at home. When these structures are in place, girls' retention and promotion rates in school increase.

What are the different types of mentoring programs?

Adult/Child Programs provide children with adult mentors who give them guidance, support and encouragement. In the developing world many parents have little or no education, and must focus their energy on providing basic necessities. Parents often do not have the knowledge or time to provide their children with the attention they need or with educational guidance. To compensate for this, adult mentors serve as role models for their protégés, demonstrating the possibility of a better life.

> The **Girls' and Women's Mentoring Conference** in Ethiopia pairs girls throughout Ethiopia with professional women. Girls spend a day with their mentors at their workplace and a night in their mentors' homes, learning about what the life of a professional woman is like at the workplace and at home. After their stay, they participate in conference sessions and follow-up discussions during the Girls' and Women's Mentoring Conference. They are also encouraged to share information about their experiences when they return to their towns and villages after the conference.

> Initiated in 1987, the **Science, Technology and Mathematics Education Clinic** for girls in Ghana introduces girls to various science and technology disciplines. During a two-week period girls visit industries, research institutions, laboratories, universities and medical schools, power plants, military establishments, and the like, to look at the organization's administrative structure and the type of work done. The mostly female scientists, industrialists and technologists who supervise the girls during their visits serve as role models, helping to overcome girls' negative stereotypes about science and math careers.

Parent/Child Programs are designed to benefit both children and parents. They attempt to involve parents in schools and help them provide a supportive environment at home. Such programs often provide career information, tutoring and counseling to students and their parents. They are especially beneficial in places where parents do not see the importance of educating their daughters, and where girls face strong obstacles to completing their education.

> A mothers' and girls' club in El Salvador, *La Nueva Esperanza*, is a low-cost program that provides Saturday classes in income-producing skills, an incentive program of back-to-school motivational packages, a small scholarship program, and two types of mentoring, informal tutoring, on an as-needed basis, for high school scholarship students, and "Saturday Scholarships" for selected club members.

High school-age club members are encouraged to bring their needs for academic assistance to club leaders. If the sponsors have knowledge of a subject, one of them meets with girls who need help. If none of the leaders can provide the help, teachers are asked to identify a peer tutor. On one occasion a sponsor recorded cassette tapes for a student who was having difficulty with a foreign language.

"Saturday Scholarships" provide the cost of transportation to the capital and lunch, enabling girls to attend programs at a prestigious university, tour the campus, and see several sights. For some of the girls these trips are their first visit to the capital. The occasion provides a view of university education to girls who often are unfamiliar with this option.

Peer Mentoring programs are particularly beneficial in countries where resources are limited and it is difficult to find adult mentors. In such a program, successful older students are matched with a younger student who is disadvantaged, performing poorly in school or at risk of dropping out of school. Both mentors and protégés derive benefit in a peer mentoring program.

The *Fille pour Fille* (Girl for Girl) Program is one of several UNICEF activities in Benin that seeks to increase girls' participation in education. Sixth and seventh graders act as tutors, confidantes, and mentors to first through third graders. The protégés are girls deemed by a village committee to be the most vulnerable and are usually from dysfunctional or severely economically disadvantaged families. Mentors visit the girls in their homes, help with homework, and talk to them about their difficulties at home and school. When problems are identified, such as physical abuse or harassment from teachers, mentors report them to the village elders, who intercede on the girl's behalf.

The Students Tutoring for Achievement and Retention (STAR) program, begun in April 1996, is a peer-tutoring program serving nearly 900 girls in four primary schools and two high schools in Lomé, Togo. The program is managed in partnership between the parents and the *Club des Enfants du Monde,* a nongovernmental organization. The program provides teachers with training on gender issues and conducts activities to sensitize the community to the importance of girls' education. Most important, the program attempts to improve retention and achievement through one-on-one tutoring. Under the supervision of teachers, the tutoring occurs two days a week for two hours at a time throughout the academic year. Adult volunteers from the community also visit the girls' families once each month.

WHY IS YOUR ORGANIZATION IDEALLY SUITED TO START A MENTORING PROGRAM?

- You have experience in program administration, implementation, and monitoring.
- You know how to work with, and earn the respect of, beneficiary communities.
- You can provide youth with new social, cultural, and educational experiences.
- You can provide positive role models for youth.

Mentoring programs offer a cost-effective means of assisting youth in need of adult nurturing and skill building, and of highlighting a positive, socially concerned image for your organization. If you are considering implementing a mentoring program, it is important to evaluate your organizational capacity for administering the program in-house. Administering a new program can be expensive and time consuming if an organization is not experienced in the program area. Consider the following questions to assess your

organization's capacity to operate a mentoring program:

- Is the organization involved in the delivery of services?
- Does it have staff in the target areas or is it planning to put staff there?
- Does the staff have relevant experience? If not, can people be trained to administer a mentoring program?
- Does the staff have an interest in administering a mentoring program for girls' education?

If the answer to any of these questions is "no," then consider outsourcing or contracting the program to an organization that has the requisite experience. Effective implementation of mentoring programs requires knowledge and experience in community development, management, training, and evaluation. Organizations that work in development and education (particularly girls' education) at the national or local level should be identified and enlisted to provide support.

HOW CAN YOUR ORGANIZATION START A MENTORING PROGRAM?

Establish a committee to formulate policies and oversee the program's implementation, monitoring, and evaluation. If necessary, this committee can identify and solicit the participation of organizations that have the appropriate skills and experience with mentoring programs or girls' education. The committee should write an implementation plan if the organization will be implementing the program. Otherwise, potential organizations should submit an implementation plan as part of the selection process. Responsibilities of the implementing organization that should be included in the implementation plan include a statement of work and a budget. Either the implementation plan or the statement of work should include information about coordination with participating institutions; how training and technical assistance will be provided; and how program activities will be developed, coordinated and monitored.

STEPS IN IMPLEMENTING A MENTORING PROGRAM

First, conduct a needs assessment. Assess the community's most important needs and decide whether the mentoring program can address them. Learn about the community's aspirations for girls, the target audience, and the ages of those in the target group. Develop goals for the program. Learn about potential mentors within the community.

Second, determine the program's objectives and methods. Mentoring programs can use either a developmental or prescriptive approach. Developmental programs focus on creating trusting relationships, providing holistic support, and helping protégés through transitions. Prescriptive programs specify problem-oriented goals for the mentoring relationship, such as preventing dropout or providing the protégé with academic support and tutoring.

Third, establish and enforce guidelines. Establishing guidelines requires the sponsoring organization to define the target population, identify mentors and protégés, specify the nature of the mentoring relationship, determine the commitment of mentors and protégés to each other, and set (or not set) limits on the duration of the relationship.

Fourth, recruit mentors and protégés. Depending on the program's goals and objectives, mentors can be peers, parents, siblings, teachers, school administrators, and business, religious, or community leaders. Mentors can be people who are experienced in a particular career or individuals who care about nurturing others. Depending on the program's goals, protégés can be from a specially targeted population, such as disadvantaged or minority girls, or any group of young people who might benefit from the program.

Fifth, train mentors. Preservice training and ongoing, structural support for mentors are vital aspects of a mentoring program. Mentor training topics may include program goals and philosophy, communication skills and conflict management, building positive relationships, the kinds of activities to use with protégés, how to recognize and support sexual abuse, and mentoring program logistics.

Sixth, effectively match mentors with protégés. This is critical. Programs need to consider mentors' and protégés' similarities and differences. Differences between mentors and protégés can enhance the mentoring relationship and increase learning or may cause problems. In matching mentors and protégés, it is important to assess the protégé's needs and find a mentor who can address those needs.

Seventh, introduce mentors and protégés. The first meeting and orientation of mentors and their protégés is usually in a group setting. Sometimes there is a specific agenda for this first meeting, such as setting goals, selecting activities, or providing input into the program design.

Eighth, help mentors plan activities to do with their protégés. Mentors often need ideas on how to motivate protégés and what activities to do with their protégés. Mentors who are matched with protégés in a workplace environment often find that their relationships develop naturally as they teach workplace skills. Mentors who do not work within such a structured environment may need help understanding why their protégés are participating in a mentoring program and what they expect to gain from it. Mentors may enjoy supplementing individual activities with protégés with group activities such as trips, seminars or games.

Ninth, monitor, evaluate, and revise the program. Establish monitoring processes and evaluation procedures to examine how well program objectives are being met. Based on this information, revise the program as needed. Evaluation tools may include surveys, interviews, mentor journals, portfolios of protégés work, progress records, and conversations with school officials. Evaluations can also be designed to measure both short-term outcomes, such as higher test scores, and long-term outcomes such as sustained academic improvement.

WHAT SHOULD THE PROGRAM BUDGET BE?

The cost of implementing a mentoring program will depend on the number of participants and the availability and cost of local resources, including staff, equipment, and facilities. Those developing budgets must also determine whether mentors will be paid for their participation and whether mentors and protégés will receive a stipend for participating. Costs will also depend on whether meeting space needs to be acquired or rented and the nature of activities the sponsoring agency organizes. Whatever the costs, mentoring tends to be relatively inexpensive, but the benefits and rewards are typically high.

Illustrative Budget

Category	Estimated Percentage
Salaries and wages (program coordinator, administrative assistants, consultants)	35%
Mentor and/or protégé stipends	25%
Start-up and operating costs (expenses incurred in starting up and operating the program such as rent, equipment, communication, printing, supplies)	25%
Travel and per diem	10%
Monitoring and evaluation	5%

How long should the mentoring program take to implement?

Once funding is obtained for a mentoring program, it can be implemented within four months. Here is a suggested time line for implementation activities.

Project Time Line

Activities	Month			
	1	2	3	4
Assess local resources	✗			
Conduct needs assessment	✗			
Formulate strategy and select advisory committee	✗			
Determine selection criteria for mentors and protégés	✗			
Develop program strategy and work plan		✗		
Develop participation guidelines and handbook		✗	✗	
Recruit and select mentors and protégés		✗	✗	
Collect and analyze baseline data			✗	✗
Develop training materials for mentors			✗	✗
Train mentors				✗
Conduct orientation				✗
Implement program				✗

SUMMARY

Mentoring programs can provide substantial benefits to girls for relatively little cost. Benefits of mentoring programs include helping girls improve their academic performance; preparing girls for the transition to adulthood; providing girls with information about careers and job opportunities; giving them nurturance, support and encouragement, and helping them cope with difficult circumstances. Mentoring programs often work with parents as well, helping them to understand the importance of educating their daughters. Mentors, especially female role models, can make a difference in girls' participation and persistence in education and in their personal and economic lives after schooling is over, thereby having an impact on the entire community.

WHERE TO GO FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more information, contact your ministry or department of education for a list of schools and organizations working in education in your region.

This paper is one of a series of project designs on activities to promote girls' education. The series includes:

1.   *Enhancing Girls' Education through Community Schools*

2.   *Improving the Physical Environment in Support of Girls' Education*

3.   *Investments That Yield High Returns: Scholarships for Girls*

4.   *Using Incentives to Promote Girls' Education*

5.   *Using Mentoring to Promote Girls' Education*

6.   *Using Special Programs as a Strategy to Educate Out-of-School Girls*

7.   *Using Girls' Clubs to Promote Girls' Education.*